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ABSTRACT

This panel discussion focuses on alternative teacher certification. Alternative certification is a way of becoming a bilingual education or English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teacher without completing a preservice college program. It has three areas: formal instruction, school-based supervision, and evaluation. It serves the purpose of more rapidly increasing the pool of bilingual education and ESL teachers. Annalisa Allegro describes a model of alternative certification in New Jersey. Migdalia Romero deals with a framework for alternative certification. Elena Izquierdo describes the District of Columbia's "Retooling Initiative" for meeting the demands of language minority students. The initiative was aimed at certified teachers with classroom experience and demonstrated competency with the goal of reequipping them to perform new roles. Barbara Clements comments on the discussion of the three panelists, titling her comments "the pros and cons of alternative certification for bilingual teachers." (VWL)

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The Assessment of Alternative Certification Practices: Panel Presentations

Annalisa Allegro
New Jersey Department of Education

In an attempt to get through all the material, I hope that I don't lapse into my East Coast double speed talk. I want to thank Dr. Garcia this morning for his wonderful introduction of New Jersey; although I feel it may be unfounded, it was good to hear New Jersey spoken of so highly.

New Jersey's alternative certification route has been acclaimed by several organizations. One well known organization quotes -- that "the New Jersey alternative certification route is one of the most effective and promising strategies for improving teacher supply and quality and therefore, public education." Education Week recently came out with an editorial on alternative certification entitled, "Alternative Certification Is An Oxymoron," and I believe that fits the New Jersey model.

This is not going to be a typical bureaucratic presentation. What I'd like to do is to tell you about the New Jersey model and some of the pitfalls as it pertains to bilingual and ESL teachers. Alternative certification began in New Jersey in 1985. It was to be implemented for bilingual and ESL teachers in 1991 but has been delayed a year. So what I am speaking of are predictions for the future. And also, as a prelude to this, I think I need to explain -- or put alternative certification in a context, the development of it. I'd like to provide you with some background on New Jersey.

There are 567 school districts in the small state New Jersey; 410 districts have LEP students. We have mandates for bilingual education. If there are 20 or more LEP students of a single language group in a district, bilingual education programs must be instituted. Bilingual education programs always include ESL instruction. There are more than 80 bilingual programs in New Jersey. Spanish programs are the most predominant, but we also have Arabic, Japanese, Korean, Haitian Creole, Polish, Vietnamese Mandarin, and Gujarati. So we are in need of many bilingual teachers and we are in need of teachers from many different language backgrounds. There are also more than 170 ESL-only programs. Therefore, there is a great demand for ESL teachers in the 80 bilingual programs as well as in the 170 ESL-only programs.

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Alternative certification has been proclaimed as a way of increasing the pool of teachers. New Jersey provides certification for both bilingual and ESL teachers. The regulations for certification are developed by the Department of Education and passed by the State Board of Education. Prior to the current changes, to become a bilingual teacher, you needed to have an elementary or a content area certificate plus a bilingual endorsement which was an 18-credit hour course of study. An ESL certified stands by itself, covers grades K through 12, and was a 24-credit hours course of study until changes were instituted.

As part of the background it is important to know that the Department of Education in New Jersey is separate from the Department of Higher Education and, specifically, the division of teacher certification developed all certification rules without much input from the office of bilingual education.

Alternative certification is simply an alternate way of becoming a teacher without completing a preservice college program. Alternative certification has three areas: formal instruction, school-based supervision, and evaluation. Sounds pretty good, formal instruction so you get the theory; school-based supervision, with mentorship and coaching sounds great; and lastly, evaluation. Let's take a look at it for bilingual and ESL teachers, bearing in mind that we wanted to increase the pool and improve the quality of teachers.

In order to become eligible to be an alternative route candidate, you have to have a bachelor's degree in some area -- history, science, whatever. You must then pass the NTE Communications Skills Test. If you want to be a bilingual teacher, you have to pass an NTE subject area test. At the high school level, you would have to have a subject area test -- science, history, or social studies. At the elementary level, you would need to pass the NTE General Knowledge, Test which poses great difficulty for language minority candidates. Now we have two standardized tests that a candidate must pass to get into the alternate route. No candidate can enter a classroom until both tests have been successfully passed.

The provisional program is generally a one-year program but, for bilingual and ESL teachers, it turns out to be a two-year program because general education courses and the specific courses in bilingual education or ESL are required. If you already have a teaching certificate in New Jersey, you would be exempt from the 12-15 credits of instructional theories in education and curriculum, learning development, and classroom management.

To become an ESL teacher, you would take those courses in the first year and then, in your second year, you would take 180 hours of classes in linguistics, second language acquisition, methodology, etcetera, which works out to be 12 credits. Prior to this, 24 credits

were required. To become a bilingual teacher, you would take 200 hours of general education courses and then, in your second year, 90 hours in bilingual education. That works out to be six credit hours. Prior to the changes, 18 credits in bilingual education theories, methodologies, etcetera were required. I also would like to add that this formal instruction of general education and bilingual ESL is not provided by universities, it is to be provided by state centers. We have had no development of such state centers to date for bilingual and ESL education. The district also has the option of providing this training.

While we've begun to collaborate with the school district, we haven't provided enough support to implement such professional training programs.

Let's move to the aspect of supervision. Here is where a team of people help the teacher candidate through his or her first year of teaching. One of the people in this group is designated a mentor, an experienced teacher, who would supervise, assist, and train the teacher candidate. Now that sounds great! Let's take a look at it.

The support team consists of the principal, the school, a mentor teacher experienced in the area, if possible, and two other staff in related fields, for instance, a curriculum person or a content area department chair; During the first 20 days as a teacher candidate you are not fully responsible for the classroom. A mentor teacher is in the classroom and oversees the candidate's teaching. Thereafter, for the next two and a half months, you are to be observed once a week by one of the members of the support team. For the next three months, there are at least monthly observations. Now let's look at who the support team is going to be. In large bilingual programs such as Newark, they have a hard time hiring Bengoli and Gujarati teachers. Who is qualified to mentor the Gujarati candidate? Within the large Spanish or Portuguese bilingual programs they are unable to borrow any of the certified bilingual teachers to mentor new candidates. Let's take a look at a small suburban Spanish bilingual program with only two bilingual teachers. It's virtually impossible to mentor a candidate because both teachers' schedules are filled.

Now let's look at ESL teacher candidates in a district with a new program. Who is going to supervise the ESL teacher candidate? There are no certified ESL teachers there. The state says that any experienced teacher could supervise. An elementary teacher could mentor a teacher candidate for bilingual education. A history teacher could mentor a teacher for the secondary bilingual teacher candidate. That's fine, but do they have experience or training in working with LEP Students? The same thing is true with an ESL teacher. While any certified teacher would be acceptable to the state, what kind of quality supervision, training, and mentorship are you providing for these teacher candidates?

There must be an evaluation of teacher candidates three times during the year. Two evaluations are formative, with the first one after 10 weeks of being in full charge of the classroom, the second formative evaluation after 20 weeks. The mentor teacher would provide these evaluations and the principal would have input on the summative evaluation. How is the mentor teacher going to evaluate the teacher candidate on his or her ability to communicate, to provide appropriate responses or appropriate lessons if the mentor teacher does not understand the language and has not worked with LEP students?

In order to increase the pool of teachers, incentives should be provided for districts or teacher candidates. The teacher candidate pays a fee of $450 to the mentor teacher, $550 must be paid to the experienced teacher who serves as a member of the support team, and a fee of $600 must be paid to the Commissioner of Education for instruction provided at the regional center. The teacher candidate is responsible for these fees. While the teacher candidate is paid a salary, many teacher candidates start at the minimum which is $18,500. I don't know if there is much incentive for people to enter the field of bilingual/ESL education in New Jersey.

There's one other aspect I would like to add to this presentation. In New Jersey there is no requirement to receive any other education beyond a bachelor's degree while teaching. You are not required to take additional university credits or in-service credits. When I taught in the District of Columbia, six hours of in-service were required every five years. Many teachers in New Jersey do take courses, of course, but there is no mandate for continuing education. The quality of the teaching force is questionable.

There is something to learn from the New Jersey experience. The basic format of how it was developed is a framework but actual implementation and state support must be strengthened. The state of New Jersey has issued many mandates, therefore, it has great control over our education. In this case, the department of education has blocked its commitment to quality education for second language learners, by quality education, you are not going to be increasing the pool of teachers by issuing regulations which stops the opportunities for additional bilingual and ESL teachers.

Migdalia Romero
Hunter College, New York

The three of us decided -- we didn't collaborate, we knew what our topic was, alternative certification, alternative forms of certification, and each of us developed something I think complements each other's presentation. Mine really deals more with a framework for certification. I've divided my presentation into five parts: first I'm going to state the problem; second, give you a framework, state of the art and where things need to be going; third, give you five interesting practices that come from the field that exemplify alternative forms of certification; fourth, address some unresolved issues in the alternative framework for certifications; and fifth, end up with some recommendations.

A colleague of mine -- he was also a Title VII Fellow -- actually he's a faculty member in the Department of Curriculum in Teaching, where I am a chair at Hunter College, did his dissertation on Puerto Rican males, 180 Puerto Rican males. I'm going to share one statistic with you because I think it exemplifies part of the problem I'm going to be addressing. The statistic is that he found the average GPA of the Puerto Rican male population that he was working with was 2.42. The average GPA of the white population that was part of the group was 2.97.

Now, the Hunter College teacher education program has just raised its GPA for entry into the teacher education program from 2.5 to 2.7. That forecloses -- closes out -- some of the very people that we need to be attracting into the field of teacher education and, in particular, bilingual education. Other kinds of things that are happening in the field, for example, using Hunter as a reference point, is that we have so many students we're trying to get into the TESOL program that we have closed enrollment for matriculation for one semester. Again, in a field where we need people -- this is a public education institution that's supposed to be preparing people for working in public schools -- we're closing doors.

The new certification and recertification processes that are being used throughout the country and, in particular, the exams that are being used to certify people as teachers are weeding out the language minorities and the very people that are needed for our bilingual program. I see the problem as threefold, and I'm going to address each of these. First, the minority representation problem; second, there is a testing problem; and third, there is a problem with how certification is implemented, how it is perceived and the philosophy behind it. In the first problem of representation, we find an under-represen-

tation of the students that are being served by the public schools. So, if we have large Hispanic populations or Asian populations in the schools, we don't have teachers in sufficient numbers to serve these students. I'm not suggesting that only Hispanic teachers can teach Hispanic students or only Asian teachers can teach Asian students. But Asian teachers, Hispanic teachers, Haitian teachers, bring in knowledge, sensitivity, and skills that you can't easily develop in a teacher training program.

As an example, I cite the statistics I got from AACTE, 16.2 percent of all school youths are African-Americans, and only 10.3 percent of teachers are African-American. Nine percent of the students are Hispanic, but fewer than 2 percent of teachers -- this is the National Education Association, 1987, statistics. The projection for the future is more dismal in that our most talented minorities are not coming into teaching. There's not enough of an incentive economically for them to do so, they are seeking other fields. So, the recruitment problem is very real. There are more opportunities for minorities in other fields and there is poor recruitment of them. That's the representation problem.

The second problem is the testing problem. There is an increased reliance on testing as a means of certification. In fact, as of April 1987, 48 states had adopted some form of testing, but only seven had included satisfactory performance observation. I say that because the direction I'm going to be moving is looking at performance as part of that certification process. As part of the testing problem, there is a higher fail rate of minorities in certification tests. From 1986 to 1987, 81 percent of white candidates passed California's state certification test and, 34 percent of blacks; 59 percent of Mexican-Americans failed and 51 percent of other Latinos. So we're seeing, again, the group of teachers that we're trying to attract are doing least well on paper and pencil tests, and we need to talk about that a little bit more.

To give you another example of how tests are weeding out people and the problems that are created by tests, I cite statistics on the New York State teacher candidates taking the National Teacher Exam (NTE) in March of 1990. In communication skills, 37.8 percent of Asian students passed; Puerto Ricans, 48.5. In general knowledge, I'm just going to point to the lowest statistic, the Puerto Ricans, who in general knowledge saw only 37.4 percent pass. Overall, 70 percent passed, so half that number were passing among Puerto Ricans. In professional knowledge, Puerto Ricans again scored the lowest pass rate, 52.3 percent, Asians were 53.6 percent, and whites were 89.3 percent. Quite a difference.

There are clearly some issues and problems that are suggested by these statistics, and I think one of the recommendations I'll be

moving toward is we need more discrete analysis of the tests that are given to find out what the issues are, what the problems are, and what we need to be addressing in teacher training if we are to attract some of the people that we need. The tests, in fact, are keeping out some of the minorities whose sensitivities, cultural and linguistic knowledge, and skills, and their performance in classrooms, would most benefit English language learners. Another example, and it's just a personal example of a teacher when I first started teaching. She was a wonderful, wonderful kindergarten teacher. In fact, I chose her class to put my daughter in. My daughter at that time was four or five years old. This teacher took the NTE at least four times and had tremendous difficulty passing it. An exceptional teacher, a teacher who was perfectly fluent in English, born and raised in New York, and fluent in Spanish but more fluent in English, but she had trouble passing the NTE.

So, we're going to see it over and over in some of the comments I'm making that the tests have poor predictability. The test often does not test the skills that are needed in classrooms with children. It tests accumulative knowledge of students, and we're not sure of the relationship between that knowledge and the effectiveness of that individual in a classroom. The question is, how do we improve the certification process so that we are not relying exclusively on tests to weed out individuals who could be good teacher candidates?

The framework that I'm going to speak of -- I've divided it into -- first of all, looking at a distinction between training and certification. Certification is a process, the way it is perceived now and the way it is acted on now is a process that is evaluative in nature, it is a stamp of approval by an agency, a state education agency or a local education agency, a stamp of approval that this person is qualified to teach. It is also private. You do it, usually a paper and pencil test, you do it alone, and it is a process that screens out individuals.

Training, on the other hand, is a supportive process; it is a reflective process. It is established to engage people in thinking through what they are doing, in planning, in evaluating, what they're doing in a classroom and how effective they are. It is interactive in nature. Teachers in a training program interact with students, they interact with colleagues in a professional way and it leads toward improvement.

The reason I make that distinction between certification and training is because in more enlightened states or districts, the field and the direction of the field seem to be going toward the melding of certification with training, where training becomes part of the certification process. Alternative certification was defined by one of our previous speakers as a way to circumvent preservice education pro-

grams and to allow teacher candidates to go directly into schools and to help them get certified.

Again, the implication is that a training process that is labeled as an alternative certification process is a way of getting teachers to become better at what they do, taking people without any education background and getting them to a point where they are certified or endorsed. Traditionally, there have been two points at which teachers are certified, preservice certification, which qualifies them to go into a classroom and do practice teaching, usually at the end of a bachelor's program with some credits in education, and then at the end there is a stamp of approval that says they are fully qualified, and we call that the in-service or post-service certification process. One is for temporary certification and the other is for permanent certification.

The field is moving toward mastery certification or recertification. There's a group called The National Board for Professional Teacher Certification. In fact, there is a meeting next week, and I'm going to be part of that group that is looking at certifying teachers at a national level, so we're not talking state or local certification. We are talking about certification for teachers for purposes potentially of merit pay, of being able to take that certification to any other state, and it gives them a lot more flexibility in seeking jobs. So the field is moving toward a mastery certification process.

What are some of the routes to certification that currently exist? The first one I keep alluding to is the test -- using a test as the basis for certification. It is supposed to be an objective test. The second route to certification is certifying -- and states often do this, they will certify a program, an institution of higher education submits a plan, this is how we certify our teachers, these are the credits they have to take in these different areas, this is the amount of field supervision they have, and the state certifies the program. And if teachers go through -- and all of you are familiar with that -- they come out certified.

Currently 49 states accredit teacher education through a process known as program approval. That is, using state standards, institutions design preparation programs that are subsequently approved by the state. However, the certification process is only as good as the programs, and the teachers are only as good as the programs they go through.

The third route to certification is neither the test nor the program, but it is again the movement of the field toward performance-based certification. Let me just list a few of the formats that seem to be taking: videotaping and self-evaluation, observation of teachers, portfolio maintenance of student work, peer review, mentorship,

coaching, interviews with teachers to find out what it is they are doing professionally. There seems to be a movement in the field toward greater on-site supervision required as part of the alternative certification process. Basically, what we are certifying is either experience, accumulated knowledge, or demonstrated skills. I have a problem with that because I think we also need to be looking at creativity as part of that certification process, the degree to which individuals are able to reflect on what they do and improve on what they do.

The way tests stand now they cannot test creativity. So one element of a really good teacher is being able to be reflective about what he or she does and improve on it. Tests don't test that. So, this is why the field is moving toward certification as an ongoing process, where you can look at creativity as part of that process.

Let me share with you some practices in the field, mentorship programs; we have one at Hunter College. It's a four-year support program. New teachers are placed in schools and assigned to mentor teachers, but there's also a university faculty member who goes into the classroom, observes teachers, and does demonstrations when necessary. It's a very supportive program. New Jersey will be talking about another mentorship and alternative certification program that it has.

Another example is an International High School in New York that gets its teachers much more involved in certification process through a supportive certification process in which new teachers are paired off with more experienced teachers and they put together portfolios. The portfolios include work that they have done as teachers, lessons they have done that they think are exemplary. They can select their own lessons -- student work that exemplifies the kinds of experiences they have given their kids and how their students have grown. In the portfolio one can do documentation of professional development, conferences attended, etcetera, as well as observation reports, logs, and self-analysis of how information on students has been used to improve or change teaching. The documentation is on creativity and reflection.

By 1992, even Educational Testing Service (ETS) is moving in this direction. ETS will replace the national teachers' exam which is most frequently used for teacher certification with a comprehensive teacher assessment profile including computer simulations, interactive video, portfolio development, and classroom observation. ETS believes that comprehensive assessment administered at different points in a perspective teacher's education will give students a better chance to demonstrate the knowledge and skills that relate significantly to classroom performance.

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What are my recommendations? Number one, we need more discrete analysis of the needs of minorities in the certification process and of their strengths so as to build on those strengths, to tap those strengths and to meet the real needs. Secondly, we need a comprehensive teacher certification process of which testing is only one part and a process that uses multiple assessment methods. Third, we need a melding of certification and training so that the process of developing teachers is used as part of that certification process. Fourth, we need more careful examination of and attention to supervised field experience as part of the certification process. Fifth and finally, we need to bring the certification process in line with our thinking about teaching as an intellectual and creative art.

Elena Izquierdo
District of Columbia Public Schools

Confronted with serious budgetary constraints, changing demographics in the city, policies that lowered the mandatory school age (age 5), new federal and state requirements for disabled learners and, in addition, competition with surrounding school districts both in recruitment and retention, the District of Columbia was challenged to look for very creative and innovative ways of refining the roles of its teachers in addressing the needs of the students in the district. The District of Columbia Public Schools initiated a Retooling Initiative in order to meet the needs of its student population.

The Retooling Initiative was aimed at certified teachers with classroom experience and demonstrated competency with the goal of reequipping them to perform new roles.

Teacher Retooling Survey

The District of Columbia developed a Teacher Retooling Survey to begin the process of utilizing its existing resources in meeting the needs of its student population. The teacher survey was developed and disseminated to all teachers in the DC schools in May 1991. It asked teachers whether they were interested in retooling in the areas of critical need for its student population: Bilingual Education, ESL, Early Childhood, Special Education, Bilingual Special Education, Science, Mathematics, Elementary Education, Foreign Languages, Computer Science and Technology. Teachers were also asked to give their current certification area, teaching assignment, years of experience, language proficiencies, and degrees. It is important to note that this was a voluntary survey, and teachers who responded did so only because they were interested. The office of Research and Evaluation for DC Schools then compiled all the data and presented each division with its respective data.

The results of the survey were phenomenal! There were over seven hundred (700) teachers who expressed an interest in the area of Bilingual/ESL.

In the District of Columbia, there are more than 9,000 language minority students representing over 100 different language groups.

The number of language minority students with limited-English language proficiency increases daily in the district. In an effort to meet the needs of limited-English proficient students, and maintain within the existing framework of limitations, the Language Minority

Affairs Branch, Local Education Agency for Bilingual Education, used the results of the teacher survey and ventured into a Bilingual/ESL Teacher Retooling Institute.

Selection Process

With a response of more than seven hundred (700), we began to organize a very rigorous process for teacher participant selection given that I only had the funds to retool fifty (50) teachers. One of the questions on the survey asked teachers whether they would be willing to begin classes in the summer of June 1990, with six (6) credit hours, if funding was made available to them. Not all of the seven hundred (700) teachers interested were able to commit. This provided us with the first cut in the selection process.

These teachers were then contacted for an orientation meeting that provided them with an overview of the critical needs of the district, Bilingual/ESL Education, the Retooling Institute, and an outline of the areas of competencies in Bilingual/ESL needed for certification (Historical, Philosophical, Educational, and Sociological Bases of the Education of Language Minority Students; Understanding the process of First and Second Language Acquisition; Methodologies, Learning Styles; Multicultural Education; Alternative Assessments; Principles of Effective Instruction for the Education of the Language Minority Child). Teachers had to commit to the entire summer program and, in addition, commit to course work in the fall, spring, and a practicum during the following summer for a total of twenty-four (24) graduate credit hours leading to certification in this area. In addition, it was explained to them that, at the end of the course work and certification, they would be placed in schools where there was a need for services in the area of Bilingual/ESL Education. They also had to commit to work in this field in the DC schools for a minimum of two (2) years. Their commitment to the Retooling Initiative was strongly emphasized, and they were discouraged to apply if they could not commit. This provided the second cut of possible retooling applicants.

Those teachers who expressed their commitment were then given an application to complete. The application consisted of information such as teaching experience, degrees held, past and current assignments, language proficiencies, and certification areas. In addition, they were required to write a 250-word essay on why they were interested in retooling in Bilingual/ESL Education. They had to include with their applications a recommendation letter from their current school principals and copies of their performance evaluations for the last three (3) years. The turn around date was two (2) weeks. Once received, the applications were reviewed for complete information and documentation. Those teachers who met the application re-

quirements were notified of a specific date and time for a Panel Interview. Two panels were organized in order to interview all applicants. The panel interviews were conducted simultaneously every twenty (20) minutes for two (2) days.

The panel participants consisted of principals, Bilingual/ESL teachers, and administrators knowledgeable in the field of Bilingual/ESL Education, for a total of four participants for each panel. Each participant had a score sheet for each applicant. Questions regarding methodologies used with language minority students, cultural sensitivity, interest in retooling and commitment were asked. Although the panelists recognized the fact that the applicants had little if any training in these areas, their sensitivity and responses were important. Again applicants were asked about their commitment to the Retooling Initiative, which meant that summer vacation took on a different meaning for them, and fall meant going to classes after school and/or on Saturdays. In addition to this, they were reminded that, upon completion of their coursework, they would be placed within a school that needed Bilingual/ESL teachers for a period of at least two (2) years. After each interview, panelists were instructed to complete the scoring sheet along with added comments. Based on every step of the application process, required documentation, and the interview, the teachers for the Retooling Institute were selected. I cannot over emphasize the importance of the selection process. Interested and committed applicants went through the entire process. Upon review of all documents, the teachers were selected for the Bilingual/ESL Retooling Institute.

Bilingual/ESL Teacher Retooling Institute

The Bilingual/ESL Retooling Institute was a collaborative venture between the District of Columbia Public Schools and the George Washington University. Joel Gomez, Director of the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, and Dr. Alicia Martinez, professor for the George Washington University, Teacher Preparation Department, were instrumental in developing the institute and coursework leading not only to certification and its direct application into the classroom but also to the overall success of the Retooling Institute. The goal of the institute was to retool mainstream teachers in Bilingual/ESL Education and prepare them for teaching language minority students, particularly limited-English proficient students. In the summer of 1991, DC mainstream teachers began their coursework in this area. The coursework consists of twenty-four (24) graduate credit hours inclusive of a six (6) hour practicum. The practicum includes site visits to schools with successful Bilingual/ESL programs, seminars, and teaching experience in a Bilingual/ESL classroom setting. Dr. Alicia Martinez has provided these participants with guidance, direction, and most important is her role as their mentor. This

has been a critical component of the entire institute which has led to the success of the Bilingual/ESL Retooling Initiative. These retooling teacher participants have evolved into one of the most professional, wonderful, and knowledgeable groups in the field of Bilingual/ESL Education I have seen in a while. They are working with their current principals and sharing with them and the school staff issues related to the education of language minority students.

By the completion of their course of study, the District will have teachers that are already in the system, that bring with them years of teaching experience in content areas, knowledgeable in the District's curriculum, and now knowledgeable in the education of language minority students. One of the most rewarding outcomes will be that these newly certified Bilingual/ESL teachers will have years of experience in teaching in the content areas -- and this is what the field of Bilingual/ESL Education is demanding of its teachers in order to appropriately meet the needs of language minority students. These Bilingual/ESL Teacher Retooling professionals are now some of the strongest advocates for the education of language minority students in the District of Columbia Public Schools. **The Bilingual/ESL Teacher Retooling Institute -- DC's alternative to Alternative Certification.**

Discussion of Panelists
Allegro, Romero, and Izquierdo's Presentations

Barbara Clements
Council of Chief State School Officers

I'm really happy to be here today. The whole issue of alternative certification for bilingual teachers is something I've been thinking about for six years. Right after New Jersey implemented its alternative certification program, Texas implemented a program and I worked with it at the Texas Education Agency. So I have some personal experiences I'm going to include in my discussion of some of the key things that were discussed today.

I have titled my comments "the Cons and Pros of Alternative Certification for Training Bilingual and ESL Teachers." As I said, I've been thinking over this for a long time, and I definitely think there are some good things and some not-so-good things going on. I think you've heard some of the issues discussed. So, let me summarize some of the cons and pros.

Teacher training and certification requirements are frequently mentioned as being the most formidable barrier to attracting new teachers. There's a lot of discussion about the Mickey Mouse courses that you have to take in teacher education programs, and I went through one of those programs. So, I know what they're talking about. Over the last few years there has been a lot of discussion about alternative certification and it has received the support of a lot of states. Even the President came out expressing support for alternative certification as a means of attracting highly trained and knowledgeable people into the classrooms.

I know that, in the most recent literature, I have read that some type of alternative certification programs have been adopted by approximately half of the states as a means of attracting non-education majors who are either mid-career or retired or perhaps young. The idea is to attract them into the teaching profession primarily to ease teacher shortages but also as a means of attracting better educated people. Now, it's interesting to me that there has been a high level of interest concerning this. I was fascinated that more than 700 teachers in D.C. expressed an interest in possibly being retooled through an alternative certification program.

In Texas we had an enormous amount of response to the alternative education activities that were going on there. I have a 1990-91 report that indicates there were 1,242 interns in 191 districts, so there are an awful lot of people out there who are interested in getting certified if an opportunity is made available to them.

Let me refresh your memory or reiterate some of the general requirements for most alternative certification programs. First of all, the candidate must hold a bachelor's degree. Generally this means a bachelor's degree other than in education; it is possible to get an education degree and not get certified. Secondly, the candidate must pass some sort of standardized test. Some states require the standardized test to be a basic skills test, or it might be a communication skills test. In other states it might be a content knowledge test. That's the requirement in Texas. A third requirement is that there must be some sort of compressed training that occurs before the candidate actually enters the classroom, usually that training covers instructional design, measuring student performance, and other relevant topics. Again, this is prior to becoming a teacher of record.

It appears to me that most of these training activities usually cover about four weeks. It's hard to imagine having your entire teacher education program compressed into four weeks, or at least a substantial portion of it.

A fourth requirement is that during the one year on-the-job program, and I understand that some states are already making it a two-year program, around 200 classroom hours of pedagogy are taken. They are taken over a period of time, and they are generally not done through standard university courses as you've heard today. But there are a fair number of hours that are covered.

Fifth, they have some type of support. Usually a mentor is assigned to the candidate to provide individualized support, and often there is a support team to advise and evaluate the applicant or the candidate. Now, you've heard a number of problems associated with programs of this type. New Jersey has been in this business longer than anybody else, so they really know where the potential problems are, even though they haven't trained bilingual teachers yet.

First of all, the presenter from New Jersey mentioned inadequate training, and again, I stress that we're talking about compressing an awful lot of content, knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge into a short amount of time. There are many things that we know are effective, such as cooperative learning and effective classroom management, things that are really important to getting off to a good start, having good student cooperation throughout the school year, and also learning.

Also the content that persons in alternative certification programs may have had in their college careers may not be age appropriate, and it may not reflect current theories or understanding in the area. So, there is a need to refresh their memories about the content, particularly if they're mid-career or retired people. A second type of problem has to do with the mentor teacher. Frequently the

mentor teacher may not be in the same content area because there may not be a teacher on hand in a school who's teaching exactly the same content, or maybe it's not the same language. It's very hard for the mentor teacher to evaluate, to know how to evaluate and do a good job of evaluating teacher candidates; particularly if they're not within content areas it's hard to give constructive feedback. It's also more difficult to share materials -- the collaborative piece that is supposed to be important to alternative certification.

Other problems with mentor teachers include what if they are not in the same school, or what if one mentor teacher has a whole lot of people assigned to him/her. Some programs have up to 20 people assigned to one mentor teacher. What about the fact that the mentor teachers frequently are not given any training or expectations as to what they're to do. They have to kind of "wing it."

Finally, what is the support for or incentive to participate in an alternative certification program? Some states or some school districts are offering some additional money. That's important because it reinforces the teacher for participating. I think there is an expectation that once a career ladder is established, that's a logical role for a higher level teacher to play.

A third set of problems have to do with evaluation. I noticed in one program described today that the first formative evaluation doesn't take place until the end of the first 10 weeks. That's a long time for a brand spanking new teacher to work in a classroom without any fairly structured feedback. I think new teachers of all sorts need continual support and feedback, and they also need to be taught to self-evaluate, and I'm not sure that's being included as a part of these programs.

A fourth item I want to mention has to do with passing tests because it was mentioned and because I was associated with the testing program in Texas. We did find a smaller number -- fewer of our minority candidates were passing the test than the Anglo test takers. On the other hand, of the people who were participating in the alternative certification program, a higher percentage of them are passing the test than the general teacher education school population. So it is interesting that it tends to depend on who gets brought into an alternative certification program.

Now I notice that many people who complete alternative certification programs are hired to fill vacancies in rural and urban areas. As you know, a lot of these are the most difficult areas to try to teach in. I have observed some of these classrooms and they are unbelievably difficult. Some of the bilingual classes have maybe five or six different languages within the same classroom. But it's interesting. I read that in New Jersey they've found that people who go through

the alternative route tend to leave the profession less often than those who go through the traditional preservice education route. It's also interesting to me that a large number of minorities are being recruited through these alternative certification programs.

I was involved in doing some interviews in Texas of the people who were participating in our programs. Many of them said to me that really they always wanted to be teachers. The minority teachers, in particular, said that they were encouraged to go into other fields because now the opportunities exist. Once they got into those fields and were working as chemists or physicists or mathematicians they found that they really kept thinking about what it would be like to go and teach. This included a lot of people whose parents had been teachers or school administrators. So I think there is a potential for bringing into the field a number of people who would have preferred to be there from the beginning but just got steered otherwise.

Now, there's a difference in alternative certification programs for elementary and secondary teachers. Most of the programs that the states currently have are geared toward secondary teachers. The assumption is, if you've got a degree in a content area that you can come into a secondary classroom and teach. In my personal experience, having observed in many, many classrooms and having done some teaching myself, I feel that probably at the secondary level this could work. You could probably get enough information, or nearly enough information, in those compressed four weeks of training to get off to a fairly good start, and with the 200 hours over the school year you might be able to do a fairly passable job during your first year of teaching and be able to benefit from the training and do a much better job thereafter.

However, I have some questions about the utility of these kinds of programs for elementary teachers and particularly for teachers of LEP and disabled children. It appears that in some of these programs the things that we expect of people going through preservice programs are not necessarily required for the people who are coming through alternative certification programs. I'm not so sure that's a good thing to do. So I think there is some potential there for improving the quality of the instructional requirements for teachers coming through the alternative route.

Let me close by asking the question, do I think that alternative certification programs can adequately produce bilingual teachers and address the shortages that are being felt by Texas, California, and D.C., and other places. I think perhaps they can. I think they could help. I think it depends however on what they do and what they must do. So to address what alternative certification programs can do, it's important to consider what happens to traditionally trained

teachers. Teachers who come through traditional programs enter into employment with a set of skills and knowledge that they received in college. The assumption is made that they are sufficiently well-trained to start teaching on the very first day of school. They bear equal responsibility with all the other teachers. With some exceptions, most districts give these teachers virtually no assistance during their first year of teaching. Generally, in-service training is focused on administrative requirements.

But research on beginning teachers indicates that they need a lot more assistance at the beginning of their careers. They need help with curriculum planning, classroom management, and evaluation of students, and most beginning teachers think they are not getting enough of that in their preservice education. Alternative certification programs on the other hand are generally run by districts, and in order to meet the requirements of an acceptable program, the district must carefully plan the program to ensure the candidates are adequately trained and they get the support they need to succeed.

So as a result they can tap into resources not traditionally tapped, such as teachers, and they can bring in outside consultants to help them. These programs focus on providing candidates with the kind of one-on-one training, the collaboration, the spirit of cooperation, the kinds of things that beginning teachers indicate they need during their first year of teaching. So in that way alternative certification programs may be providing beginning teachers with something that our regular beginning teachers, the teachers going through traditional programs, are not getting.

Then, to address what must be done by these programs in order to succeed, I'll quote AACTE requirements for what they think are necessary components of a program for alternative certification. They say that new candidates must receive information about child and adolescent development, measurement of student performance, information on recognizing student handicaps, legal rights of students, and finally, and I think most importantly, the impact of cultural diversity on learning styles.

So can we adequately train bilingual teachers through these programs? I don't think the results are in yet. Now if through these programs we have better access to well-educated, native speakers, we might be improving the quality of our bilingual teaching force since these people have the background and the knowledge of the language, and they can promote native language proficiency as well as English language proficiency. So they may be giving our bilingual children a better shot at succeeding, and our monolingual non-English speaking children as well. If the commitment of the teachers trained through alternative certification programs is stronger, and we have some evidence because they do tend to be more mature than

those who go through traditional programs, we may also be retaining more of our bilingual teachers for a longer period of time. And we may substantially reduce the shortage in this particular area.

We must not, however, stop monitoring the quality of the program and their capacity to meet the needs of teachers who are going to be working with this very special group of children.